

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOLS
Fiscal Year 2002

Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee:

Barbara Love, Chairperson (Amherst)
Marianne Jorgensen, Vice-Chairperson (Shutesbury)
Sandra Berkowitz, Secretary (Amherst)
Elaine Brighty (Amherst)
James Duda (Pelham)
Michael Hussin (Pelham)
Michael Katz (Leverett)
Vladimir Morales (Amherst)
Tony Rogers (Amherst)

The Regional School Committee represents the four communities that comprise the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District: Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury. It is responsible for the direction and support of the educational programs for students in Grades 7 through 12 from each of these towns. Committee meetings are open to the public, except for executive sessions as prescribed by law, and are held regularly on the second and fourth Tuesday evenings of each month. Opportunity is available at every meeting for public participation.

Dr. Gus Sayer completed his thirteenth full school year as Superintendent of Schools.

STUDENTS

The enrollment in the Regional Middle and Senior High Schools has continued to experience significant growth, as projected. Enrollments on October 1 over the last several years were as follows:

1994-1995 – 1772
1995-1996 – 1769
1996-1997 – 1907
1997-1998 – 1937
1998-1999 – 2007
1999-2000 – 2017
2000-2001 – 2044
2001-2002 – 2065

Grade	Amherst	Pelham	Leverett	Shutesbury	Tuition	Wards	Total
7	260	15	23	31	1	16	346
8	213	32	23	28	0	15	311
9	279	20	21	24	0	17	361
10	267	13	20	24	2	17	343
11	250	10	29	30	5	16	340
12	271	25	21	32	1	14	364
TOTALS	1540	115	137	169	9	95	2065

In addition, 34 Regional students were enrolled in Smith Vocational School or Franklin County Vocational-Technical School as of October 1, 2001. Thirteen students attended other school districts under the state's School Choice Program, and 48 students were enrolled at Charter Schools. Tuition for these students to attend these schools is paid by the Regional School District.

There were 253 students from Amherst who graduated with the class of 2002.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The instructional program, developed by teachers in all areas of the curriculum, reflects the overall philosophy and goals of education established by the School Committee. An appropriate range of support services remains in place to help students achieve their highest possible potential. Included among these programs are Guidance, Health Services, Special Education, English as a Second Language and Transitional Bilingual Education.

The students in the Regional schools work hard and excel. For the 2001-02 school year, the high school had 34 National Merit Commendations and 1 National Merit Scholarship semifinalist who received Certificates of Merit, in a class of 344 students. Ninety-one percent of our students will pursue higher education at colleges and universities across the nation after graduation from the Amherst Regional High School. Nationally normed standardized testing results reflect that, overall, our students score significantly above grade level in all areas tested. Students consistently enroll in courses beyond the standard graduation requirements.

Principal goals for the Regional Schools are as follows:

1. developing and maintaining an up-to-date, innovative, multicultural, academically challenging curriculum that promotes high standards and success for all students
2. providing creative, multi-faceted instruction that maintains high standards, engages all students, and enables all students to be successful learners
3. making all students feel fully welcome and a part of our schools, regardless of race, class, gender, language, religion, sexuality, culture, academic success, or physical abilities
4. eliminating the achievement gap among students from different racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds
5. addressing the demands and opportunities facing our schools as a result of the rapid growth in the use of technology throughout our society

6. increasing communication and collaboration among the district's stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and the larger community – and using parents and the community more effectively as educational resources
7. hiring and retaining a high quality teaching and administrative staff
8. equipping and maintaining school buildings to provide healthy, accessible, modern learning environments that support the achievement of our mission
9. sustaining a physically and emotionally safe environment in our schools for students and staff.

There were several matters to which the Regional School Committee and the Superintendent gave considerable attention:

- A renovation project at the middle school began August 1, 2001 and will be completed by September 1, 2002.
- In response to the report of the BAMSS Steering Committee, school-based diversity committees were organized in each building and staff development workshops dealing with anti-racist education continued to be offered to staff of the district. A new administrative position, Director of Diversity, Equity and Human Resources, was created to replace the former position of Assistant to the Superintendent for Diversity and Equity. Dr. Ernie Washington was hired in January to fill the position, which will include recruitment and personnel responsibilities.
- Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment test results were received in November for tenth grade students who were administered the test the prior spring. As experienced statewide, the results showed a remarkable increase in passing rates as well as the rate of students scoring at the Proficient and Advanced levels. Tutorial opportunities were developed for high school students who had failing scores on the MCAS in tenth grade. Sessions were held early in the school year to prepare students to retake the test. Students who participated in the tutorials reported feeling more confident when they took the retest, and scores improved. State funding also supported summer school programs for those students in danger of failing MCAS.
- Technology in the district was given a boost by using \$100,000 to upgrade and purchase new equipment for the Region. Using the funding, all infrastructure and switching equipment was upgraded and some labs were replaced. A new CAD lab was developed at the middle school and all the high school library computers were upgraded.
- The position of Secondary Curriculum Director was restructured and is now known as the Executive Director of Secondary Curriculum. The Executive Director will serve as Interim Superintendent for the Regional district in the absence of the Superintendent.
- The date of graduation for seniors was postponed as the result of an anthrax hoax at the high school in October that closed the school for two days.

- The high school principal resigned in January after allegations of inappropriate behavior were reported. Interim co-principals were appointed and a search was initiated for a replacement principal. Two finalists were identified, but neither candidate was perceived as viable for the principal's position. It was decided that the interim co-principals would serve through the 2003-04 school year, at which time another search will be conducted.

A grant of \$30,000 supported the creation of a mentoring program within the Regional schools. Utilizing the funds, some teachers were granted partial leaves to serve as mentors to new staff members.

- In anticipation of a sharp downturn in state aid, the Finance Committees of the Regional towns of Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury recommended and the Superintendent proposed an FY 03 budget that limited average assessments to a 3% increase over FY 02 assessments.
- A team from the National Association of New England Schools and Colleges conducted an extensive reaccreditation visit at the high school in the spring. The team heard from panels of students and staff and reviewed the high school's mission statement and academic profile. A report of their visit will be published in the fall of 2002.
- The high school reinstituted a temporary open-campus policy for seniors during lunch periods. Success of the program will be evaluated, and high school administrators will make recommendations to the Regional School Committee about the continuation of Open Campus in the fall.
- In response to Committee requests for a review of the "level of challenge" within the District, administrators developed plans for a multi-tiered evaluation of the rigor of courses. The upcoming accreditation report will be one vehicle utilized for the evaluation. An Annenberg Institute model was used at the middle school in the spring, which examined a "slice" of the school day, evaluating samples of teacher and student work.
- For the third consecutive year, the Freeman Foundation awarded a grant of \$20,000 to support the exchange program between students of Kanegasaki, Japan and eighth-grade students at our middle school. Two teachers and 12 students traveled to Japan in March, visiting Kanegasaki, Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima.
- The Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) held its first National Teachers' Conference in Madison, Wisconsin in September. Three Regional teachers attended the conference. A National Students' Conference, held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in October, was attended by six ARHS students. Both trips were funded by a gift from National Evaluation Systems. The MSAN is a group of 15 school districts from across the country, including the Amherst-Pelham district, whose purpose is to share information and strategies for improving the academic achievement of students, to seek funds for research, and to develop a research agenda that will guide and support the efforts of member districts to reduce the achievement gap between students of color and other students.

